**Coming Home: Bible Studies**

A theme verse for the year:

Psalm 68:6 God sets the lonely in families; he leads forth the prisoners with joyful singing.

My goal here is to inspire you with a vision of what God will be doing through our church this year.

Coming Home: 3 aspects

I. Sheep who have strayed coming home. Restoring those who have left.

II. Those who have never had a real spiritual family coming home. Saving the lost.

III. Drawing in those on the periphery. Taking care of the lambs—the young sheep.

We have four study series that we use to help these people:

1. Steps Back/Restoration studies.

2. Next Steps/Follow-up studies.

3. Jesus Study Series.

4. Traditional Study Series (that we used to call First Principles)

I. Sheep who have strayed coming home. Restoring those who have left.

Jesus said to leave the 99 and go get the 1 (Matthew 18:12)

Psalm 107:1-9

Let the redeemed of the Lord say this!!! The Lord is Good. (Jack Walker)

Let’s say this together. I say Let the redeemed of the Lord say this!!!

You say: The Lord is good.

v. 3 Those he brought home from East, West, North and South…

v. 4-5 This is the great majority of those in our world today.

-wandering in wastelands. A sense of a wasted life.

-no way to a place of safety they could settle

-hungry, thirsty, lives “ebbing away” in frivolous, meaningless activities.

v. 6a Some time in 2021 they will cry out.

v. 6b God will deliver them from their distress, but he will do it through us!

v. 7 YOU will lead them to a city and a home where they can settle.

That city, that home is God’s kingdom, it is the Bakersfield Church of Christ.

v. 8 And in December, 2021 we will have a Christmas party and they will be thanking you. Thanks to you and to God, their wandering, their hunger, their thirst their feeling that their life has been wasted will give over to a sense of satisfaction and being filled.

So, how do we help the stray sheep?

We do the “Steps Back” studies (also called restoration studies)

1. Please do not call such people “fallen away.” (Hebrews 6:4 It is impossible for those who have once been enlightened, who have tasted the heavenly gift, who have shared in the Holy Spirit… and who have fallen away to be brought back to repentance.

2. Every Case is different.

 a. Some have left the church entirely, have fallen hard into sin and are truly being restored to the fellowship.

 b. Some have never completely left the fellowship—have become very week and even stopped acting like a disciple and have not been considered “members” for quite a while.

 c. Some have stayed more or less faithful to Christ, but for various reasons, have gone to a different fellowship for quite a while.

Get advice!

But, in most cases, we will do the Steps Back/Restoration studies.

You can do the studies with people, but eventually we will have a good talk with them.

Remember to treat them as the father treated the Prodigal Son.

II. Us coming home. Drawing the sheep who have been on the periphery of the flock during Covid-19 back closer. Taking care of the lambs—the young sheep.

For this we do “Next Steps”/Follow-up studies

Finished Follow-ups Mary, May, Andrew, Will.

We need to take care of the lambs!!!

Do studies regularly. (every week is best, but ever other week is OK)

Do them one-on-one with a variety of people.

Do them in a small group.

The exact studies we do are not so important. It is that we are doing these studies.

Do them! Ask questions: How is it going? Give advice.

III. Those who have never had a real spiritual family coming home. Saving the lost.

Psalm 107:10-16

v. 10 Some sat in darkness and gloom. This has been amplified by Covid!!!

Prisoners in the iron chain of sins.

v. 11a Why? Rebellion against the words of God.

v. 11b They had not received God’s plan for their lives up to now.

v. 12 They are feeling bitter at their lives. Hopeless.

v. 13 But, in 2021 they will cry to the Lord in their trouble.

God will save them from their distress.

v. 14 He will break their chains of sin and take them out of gloomy darkness into the light.

v. 15-16 When we have our Christmas banquet/party they will be thanking the Lord, but also you for helping them, for with you God cut through the bars of iron.

The Jesus Study Series is for people who are relatively “unchurched.”

The Jesus Study Series is for those who do not already have a well-developed faith in Jesus and in the authority of the Bible.

Ironically, we do not always do a “Word” study with these people, but we nearly always do with the religious.

The “regular” Bible Study series we do with those who have some significant background in Christianity already—who already will say that they believe in the inspiration of the Bible.

A big difference: The placement of the discipleship study.

Our plan:

We will be doing this study series, but have the Bible Talk leaders share what they get out of the study. We will help you to learn how to do the studies.

Challenge: Every single member get in on some sort of Bible study with someone this year.

Restoration, Follow-up, Regular or Jesus series… Any one would be great!

Discussion groups: Name 2-3 people you would like to study the Bible with this summer or Fall. What will you do about it?